

T-797
James Skinner House
Unionville
Private

c. 1918

The James Skinner house, along with the Ockimey house, is identified by long-time Unionville residents as one of the oldest houses to remain standing in the village. Built of slightly larger dimensions than the Ockimey house, the James Skinner house includes a side entrance. Both houses, however, are in poor repair. Nevertheless the James Skinner house is reflective of the modest dwellings with few decorative touches that characterize rural black villages in Talbot County.

The titlework for this property indicates that James Skinner and his wife, Fannie, purchased this lot of ground from James M. and Lida M. Cowgill, the turn of the century owners of adjacent Lombardy plantation, in November 1918. The Skinners paid James Cowgill \$120 for the property, which would suggest that the land contained some sort of improvement. The property remained in Skinner family hands until 1953 when Fannie Skinner, then a widow, sold the house and lot to Violetta Edwards. In more recent years the house has been held by the DeShields family.

HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION

Resource Name: JAMES SKINNER HOUSE

MHT Inventory Number: T-797

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA:

- 1) Historic Period Theme(s): ARCHITECTURE
- 2) Geographic Orientation: EASTERN SHORE
- 3) Chronological/Developmental Period(s):
INDUSTRIAL/URBAN TRANSITION
1870-1930
- 4) Resource Type(s):
SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-797

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic JAMES SKINNER HOUSE

and/or common

2. Location

street & number West side of Unionville Road (MD 370) ☐ not for publicationcity, town Unionville ☐ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Talbot

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant |

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Herbert DeShields, Jr.

street & number telephone no.:

city, town Unionville state and zip code MD

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Talbot County Clerk of Court liber 424

street & number Talbot County Courthouse folio 151

city, town Easton state MD 21601

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☒ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The James Skinner house is located on the west side of Unionville Road (MD 370) in the center of the small village of Unionville, Talbot County, Maryland. The two-story, three-bay frame house faces east with the gable roof oriented on a north/south axis.

Built around 1918, this two-story side hall/parlor house sits very low to the ground; in fact, there is no discernable foundation. The dwelling is sheathed with wood shingles, and it is covered by a medium pitched asphalt shingle roof. Attached to the back of the main block is a two-story, two-bay rear wing.

The east (main) elevation is an asymmetrical facade with a side entrance and two unevenly spaced six-over-one sash windows to the south. The front door is partially glazed. Lighting the second floor are two six-over-one sash windows. The eaves to the roof are slightly extended and sloped.

The south gable end is marked by single-pane sash window on the first floor and a six-over-one sash window that lights the second floor. The north gable end, on the other hand, is a blind wall.

The west (rear) elevation of the main house is fully covered by the two-story, two-bay rear wing lighted on each floor by single-pane sash windows.

The interior was not seen.

8. Significance

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| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The James Skinner house, along with the Ockimey house, is identified by long-time Unionville residents as one of the oldest houses to remain standing in the village. Built of slightly larger dimensions than the Ockimey house, the James Skinner house includes a side entrance. Both houses, however, are in poor repair. Nevertheless the James Skinner house is reflective of the modest dwellings with few decorative touches that characterize rural black villages in Talbot County.

The titlework for this property indicates that James Skinner and his wife, Fannie, purchased this lot of ground from James M. and Lida M. Cowgill, the turn of the century owners of adjacent Lombardy plantation, in November 1918. (179/331) The Skinners paid James Cowgill \$120 for the property, which would indicate that the land contained some sort of improvement. The property remained in Skinner family hands until 1953 when Fannie Skinner, then a widow, sold the house and lot to Violetta Edwards. In more recent years the house has been held by the DeShields family. (356/407)

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Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

Zone Easting Northing

B

Zone Easting Northing

c

The figure consists of three separate bar charts, each with a horizontal axis representing the number of children (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) and a vertical axis representing frequency. The first chart (left) has bars at 0, 1, 2, and 3, with the highest bar at 1. The second chart (middle) has bars at 0, 1, 2, and 3, with the highest bar at 2. The third chart (right) has bars at 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4, with the highest bar at 3.

D

E | | | | |

F

G

H 

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>name/title</u> | Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian |
|-------------------|---|

organization Private Consultant/Talbot County **date** 6/22/90

street & number P. O. Box 5 **telephone** 301-651-1094

| | | | | |
|--------------|----------|-------|----|-------|
| city or town | Westover | state | MD | 21871 |
|--------------|----------|-------|----|-------|

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

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JAMES SKINNER HOUSE
Unionville, Maryland
Chain of title

424/151 Herbert DeShields, Sr.
Mary E. DeShields

to

11/23/1966 Herbert DeShields, Jr.

356/407 Violetta Edwards, widow

to

7/27/1959 Herbert J. DeShields, Sr.

310/331 Fannie Skinner, widow

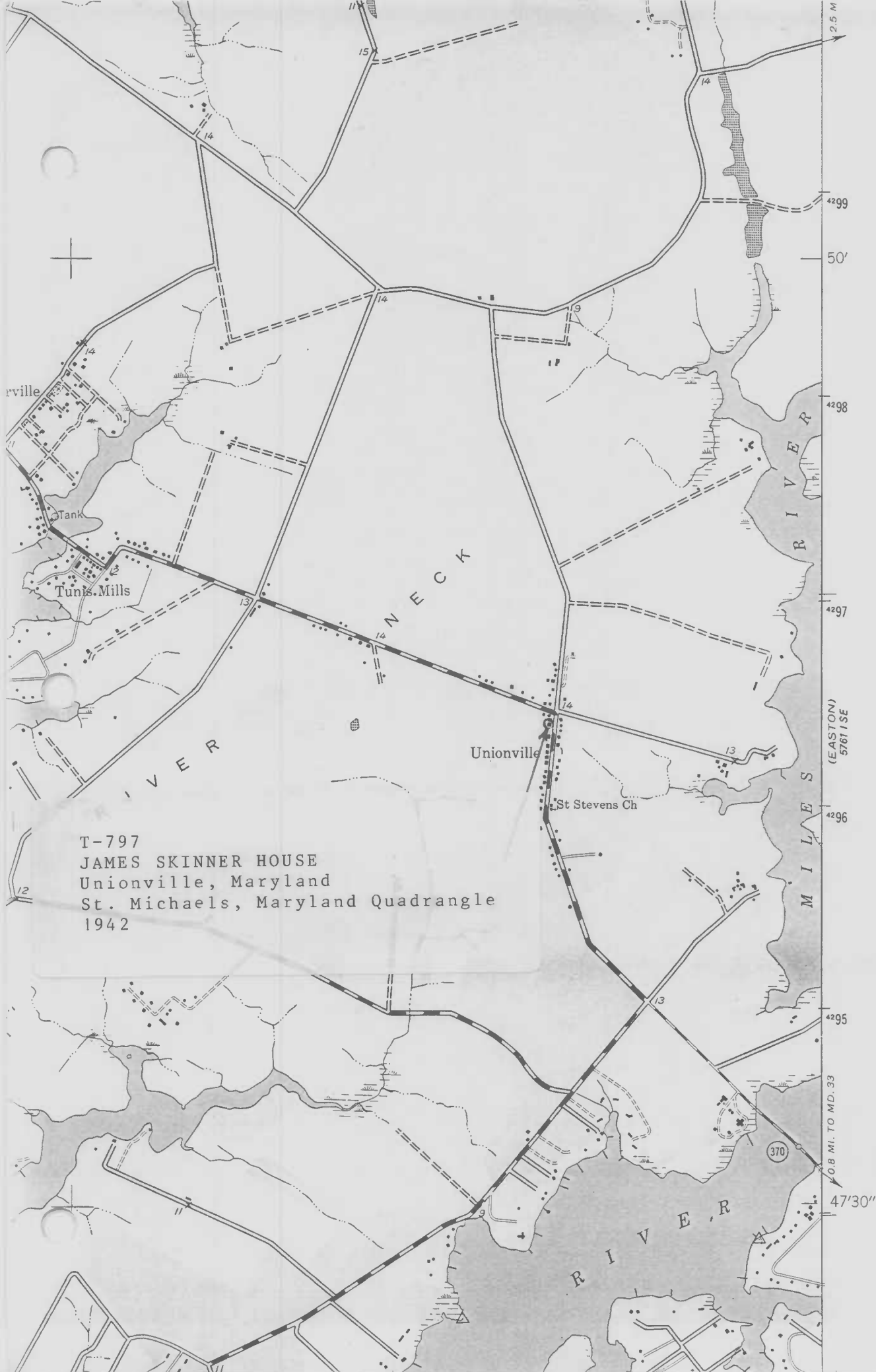
to

12/28/1953 Violetta Edwards

179/331 James M. Cowgill
Lida M. Cowgill

to

11/9/1918 James Skinner
Fannie Skinner
\$120



T-797
JAMES SKINNER HOUSE
Unionville, Maryland
St. Michaels, Maryland Quadrangle
1942



T-797

JAMES SKINNER HOUSE

Unionville, Talbot County, Maryland

East elevation

6/90, Paul Touart, photographer

Negative/MD Historical Trust